

The LongPath

A North Alabama DX Club Publication

Special points of interest:

- From the President
- Christmas Party
- Thanks
- Got Squirrels?
- Interstate DXing
- DX Contests

How to Join

- * Come to a club meeting;
- * or send in an application by mail (form on www.NADXC.org)
- * or call
Tom Duncan at
(256)705-2147

From the President

By Mark Brown, N4BCD

Happy New Year Fellow DX'ers. For the past week or so I've been thinking about this article and just finished reading Dave Sumner K1ZZ's editorial in the latest QST. His words echo what's been bothering me since 6 PM, December 31 – What Next? He was referring of course to the outrageously successful 2014 ARRL Centennial Celebration and the weekly W1AW activations that elevated HF activity to great heights.

I used the Centennial Celebration to improve my phone rates & accuracy, working RTTY, and enjoying a common bond with thousands of others caught up in the excitement of the paper chase. So much so that during the week of Christmas I found a way to operate away from home. You'll find a separate article on that topic further in the issue.

So What Next? For me it's time to learn something new. During these first few days of the New Year I've been listening down near the bottom of the band to CW that's way too fast for my ears. With persistence there's hope that my speed will improve. Maybe dabble in some low power digital modes. What's Next for you?

DX'ers have some great activations to anticipate this month – Navassa & Iran to name two. Others are in the pipeline so be sure to monitor the announced DX web sources for rare ones.

In this issue you'll also find a proposed Club budget for the coming year. Your officers and directors have prioritized the club's sponsorship of significant DXpeditions and growing the DX Banquet with bigger door prizes & controlling costs. We published but somehow missed voting in November and didn't conduct business at the December Christmas party. We'll vote on this budget at the upcoming January meeting.

Speaking of parties, the Christmas party at Terranova's was a great success with good food and good company. Let's toast the New Year with best wishes for Good DX to all.

73,

Mark N4BCD

Solar Indices January Program

Last week we had a few nights with absolutely abysmal conditions. The MUF seemed to barely make it up to 40m, terrible noise, and the few signals on the band were mushy sounding regardless of the distance. What gives?

Johnny Winter, KR4F will talk about some of the influences solar indices have on propagation. Get to Ryan's around 6:00 pm for dinner, 7:00 for the business meeting (when we'll vote



on the proposed budget on p. 6), and 7:30 for the program. See you there!

Operating from a Big Gun Station

By Mark Brown, N4BCD

The ARRL Centennial Celebration is in the history books and I had a great time operating from my home station during Tennessee's two one-week activations, plus some bonus time one evening from the K4BFT Huntsville Amateur Radio Club's shack during Alabama's turn.

The Christmas holiday found us visiting family in western Pennsylvania and coincidentally it was PA's turn at the helm of W1AW. On a lark I sent a Christmas Eve email to Tim Duffy K3LR asking if I could help at any station sometime during the week. Barely an hour later there's a reply from Tim, "You are 30 minutes away from K3LR and you are welcome to come up here and operate Saturday afternoon. Anytime after noon."

Just like that, I'm on my way to operate at one of the biggest of the big gun multi-op contest stations in the country. I met Tim during a brief July visit when Julie & I were in PA and made an unannounced stop and were given a tour of the station. At that time he was helping an operator prepare for WRTC.

On Saturday, December 27, I arrived shortly after noon and was greeted by Tim who had 3 other operators on hand all running stations. Tim ushered me to the 10m run station where I donned headphones and asked, "Is the frequency in use W1AW/4". Oops. This is /3 land so I used a post-it note to write the exchange and placed it above the keyboard function keys.

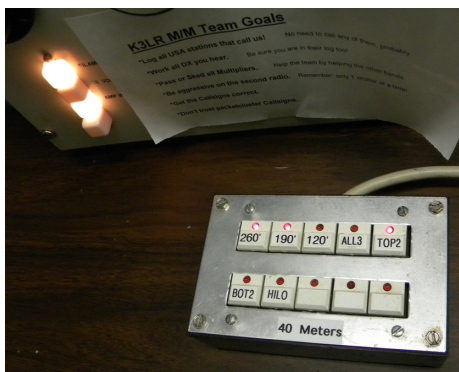


W1AW/3: N4BCD at the K3LR controls

If you've never seen this station be sure to check out the links from K3LR's QRZ web page. There are photo tours of the inside and quadcopter tours of the towers & antennas. Much more than I could include here and of better quality. Basically each station is an Icom 7700 or 7800 with its own amp & computer for logging.

For about 45 minutes I ran a good pace of domestic and international callers and at precisely 1 PM pulled the headphones off because I didn't know what time slots Tim had reserved. Tim said, "Over here. You have 40m for the next 3 hours." The 40m station was virtually identical to the 10m station - except the antennas.

There's a switch box in front of the amp and I couldn't stop looking at it.



Four elements at 260'. Four elements at 190'. Four elements at 120'. The box permitted control of which combination were driven.

Before beginning on 40m I told Tim that I was unfamiliar with the radio and asked how to operate split. His reply



The K3LR 40m run station

was simply, "You won't need to split".

Operating from here was amazing. I could hear everything and everyone could hear me. The pile-ups were not as big as expected, perhaps due to the holiday period. The real surprise occurred about 2:30 PM local time. Tim happened to be in the room (he had visitors upstairs) when he heard me struggle with a DL call. He came over and moved one antenna in the stack. From that point on I was working a mix of Europeans, NA, & SA. Until then I'd never heard Europe in the middle of the afternoon.



One of K3LR's 4L 40m antennas

Sometime during the afternoon Tim offered me a sandwich and a YL operator brought me a strong black coffee. There's a small bathroom adjacent to the radio room and walk out steps up from the radio room of the split level home to the yard. The headsets were Bose with some unknown microphone. I noted a bucket of microphones for spares among a wall of cubbyholes that contained countless custom made filters and what looked like every QST &

Cont'd on p. 3

The LongPath Staff

Publisher/Editor:

Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

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Chuck Lewis, N4NM, DX Contests

Bill Bathgate, KD8IGK, Minutes

Mark Brown, N4BCD, From the President

Operating from a Big-Gun Station

(cont'd from p. 2)

CQ magazine ever published. Lots of other spare parts too. I regret not looking behind the radios & computers at how an effective multi station ground is realized. The only observed interference were S5 key clicks from the 20m CW station.

Those three hours passed quickly and at 4 PM there was another operator ready to take over. During the run I watched as the logging program seamlessly displayed the combined log of all the stations, noting that the 20m op seemed to be working the entire world.



K3LR 40m tower

It was also time to rejoin the family for another holiday dinner so I thanked Tim for a most enjoyable stay. Tim was thankful for my volunteering as his regular contest operators were in short supply during the holiday & geographically distant. Tim was a wonderful host and my parting comment was an invitation to attend the Huntsville Hamfest. He did say he would be visiting sometime.



K3LR Multi-multi Station

The Centennial QSO Party—Glad and Sorry It is Over

By Rob Suggs, KB5EZ

What is the first callsign you copied off the air when you started learning the code? For me it was W1AW. I recall listening to those code practice sessions on my old HeathKit HR-10B receiver back in 1973. When I heard that call I knew I had tuned to the right frequency, which wasn't always obvious with that rig. I can't imagine how many times I have heard it in the past year – with /x attached. The W1AW portable operations have been great fun and sometimes a great challenge. I'm glad they are over but will surely miss the chase each evening and occasionally during my lunch break. As a little pistol running 100w to dipoles it took a little longer to get through the pileups but it was worth it. I usually didn't even try until later in each week when the crowds had subsided. Tuesday nights were just too crazy. I learned a lot about propagation and got really familiar with my rig, tuners and antennas. By watching the DX spots I would change bands and modes quickly trying to get those precious contacts. With over 600 band/mode/states confirmed and more to be submitted to Logbook of the World, I'm doing pretty well on the Leader Boards. It is very satisfying to look back at those centennial operations record sheets and see how many of those boxes were checked off. Each one was special.

The portables helped me collect those rare states like South Carolina and West Virginia so I could complete the ARRL Triple Play award in early December. That is worked all states on each mode of phone, CW, and digital. It turns out that 13 of my required 150 contacts were W1AW portables. Most of the rest were from contests but who knows how long it would have taken to get those other 13 without the portables. I didn't really start "chasing the

portables" until April. I'm glad each state had 2 sessions so I could pick up those I missed in the first go around.

The experience in the pileups and working split will surely help with my DXing. The panadapter display (LP-PAN 2 and NaP3 software) was extremely helpful in seeing where in the split the portable was listening on CW and RTTY. I got a lot better at RTTY and even got up the nerve to be W1AW/4 on 17m RTTY during both Alabama sessions. It was great to be the object of the pile for a change. I think my experience working the portables helped me manage the pileup better. I used the techniques that I saw work best – like tuning around in the spread rather than sitting on one frequency and hoping someone would decode.

I made a few JT-65 and PSK-31 contacts. My favorite phone QSO was with W1AW/5 in Texas on AMSAT Oscar 7. He actually called me during a QSO I was having with another station during a late afternoon pass. That didn't happen on any HF band. I saw /3 Delaware spotted on EME but I'm not setup for that!

I hope we don't have to wait another 100 years to do it again. But it will be nice to get some rest.

Heck, I think I can recognize that W1AW call in RTTY by ear now after all that practice!

NADXC Officers and Directors

President	Mark Brown, N4BCD
Vice President	Warren Alford, KJ4RAQ
Secretary/	Bill Bathgate, KD8IGK
Treasurer	
At-large	Kevin Hibbs, KG4TEI
directors	Tom Duncan, KG4CUI

November Meeting Minutes

Bill Bathgate, KD8IGK

1. We have sponsored of two DX Expeditions this last year (2014). Several candidates in consideration were FT4TA Trome-lin Island and KP1-5 Navassa Island. We have made a \$200.00 donation to KP1-5 Navassa Island a donation of \$100.00 to FT4TA.

2. In the last Longpath issue our financial report was missing, so I have included the information for our prior month and the current report.

3. Current Bank Balance. – Note November report

Beginning Balance Nov. 1.....\$ 3,815.67

Deposits.....\$ 35.00

Withdrawal (DX'er of the Year Plaque)

.....\$ 45.44

Ending Balance Nov. 28 \$ 3,805.23

4. Current Bank Balance. – Note December report

Beginning Balance Dec. 1..... \$ 3,805.23

Deposits.....\$ 00.00

Withdrawal (DXpeditions).....\$ 221.30

Ending Balance Jan. 6..... \$ 3,583.93

Notes provided by:

William Bathgate KD8IGK – NADXC Treasurer and Secretary

Centennial is Over!

From Randy Moore, KS4L

I thoroughly enjoyed the Centennial W1AW/n stuff, though I didn't pay much attention to it in the first few months. It gave me a reason to get on the air every day, and I find that I miss it!

73,
Randy, KS4L

Making Something Old "New" Again

By Bill Bathgate, K0AIGK

In my rare DX pursuits adding an amplifier to my station was a key addition. In 2011 I purchased a used Ameritron AL-572. I was happy with how this amp performed regarding power. But I found over time having to repair this amp on four separate occasions and this really cut into my operation time and lost opportunities. After I had a tube short out on 10M when chasing a station in Afghanistan I made up my mind to get something with a more reliable history. I wanted an Alpha amp but a new one was completely out of my budget. I figured I could afford something around \$1,500 to \$2,000.

So I kept searching the various Ham radio sites such as QRZ and QTH for something that would meet my criteria. I got a little help from Tim Winger AB4B since I was a little unfamiliar with an upgraded and more reliable amp to use for contesting and DX. One piece of valuable advice from Tim was if you get an older Alpha many need an upgrade to newer tubes because the 8877 tubes that were used in older Alpha amps are hard to come by, expensive no longer readily available. One person that does these conversions is Dick Byrd N4UQ (in GA) that has a very good track record with these kinds of upgrades.

So after several months of searching I came across an ad for a used Alpha 374A that had the N4UQ upgrade already done for \$1,900. The ham was Bill Easterly K4TXL in Greenville, TN. After some research and some added advice from Tim I closed the deal with Bill K4TXL. K4TXL was cutting down on his equipment and when I got there he had a Ten Tec 425, and 5 high end Yaesu radios he was also trying to get out of the shack. He had a second Alpha 374A in operation in the station as his primary amp. Bill K4TXL has

worked all DX available entities. He had an 80 foot Rohn 25 with tilt over and a cubicle quad and inverted L and other wire antennas.

So here is what I got:

- Alpha 374A in perfect cosmetic condition
- 10M mod
- Upgraded by N4UQ to a pair of 3CPX800A7
- Replaced lamps
- New 3 minute timer
- New load capacitor
- PA meter double shunt
- Upgrade to 1N5338 5 Watt Zener diode
- Elevated wire wound resistor with stand offs
- Two spare 3CPX800A7 new in the box tubes



One of the key features of this Alpha unit is besides 160-10M capability (except for 12M) is a feature called "Band Pass" Mode. I had never heard of this before, but after I got the amp I came to understand what this really means. Band Pass mode is similar to auto tune. The amp supports 15, 20 40 and 80M in band pass mode. I could not believe it, just flip to lever to the proper band pass position and begin to transmit. No more setting of the load and tune knobs, setting it up etc. In a contest for me this is a big deal for me and saves time. I have tested the amp on all the bands and can get 1.5KW on all bands with about 70 watts drive. I am pretty happy given my budget objectives. I have included a picture of the Alpha 374A and a picture of myself with Bill Easterly K4TXL.



2015 NADXC Budget Proposal

By Bill Bathgate, KD8IGK

2015 NADX Club Proposed Budget

Creation Date: January 7, 2015

Item #	Description	Bank Balance	Income	Expenses
1	Balance, Jan 1, 2015	\$ 3,584		
2	Dues receipts (estimated 31 members x \$15.00 each)	\$ 4,049	\$ 465	
3	Hamfest Banquet Door Prize Funds	\$ 3,749		\$ 300
4	Annual Club Picnic (shelter rental Monte Sano)	\$ 3,674		\$ 75
5	Plaque, Young Ham of the Year Award	\$ 3,624		\$ 50
6	Plaque, DX'er of the Year	\$ 3,574		\$ 50
7	Repeater Power Bill	\$ 3,494		\$ 80
8	Annual Web Hosting & Domain Service	\$ 3,419		\$ 75
9	DX Expedition Sponsorship	\$ 3,019		\$ 400
10	DX Banquet Speaker Expenses	\$ 2,869		\$ 150
11	DX Club Banquet Receipts (80 Tickets)	\$ 5,909	\$ 3,040	
12	DX Club Banquet Expenses (80 Meals based on 2014 Hotel	\$ 3,589		\$ 2,320
	Projected Year End Balance	\$ 3,589	\$ 3,505	\$ 3,500
	Net bank balance difference for the year	\$ 5		

OQRS

By Tom Russell, N4KG

This is an EXCELLENT explanation of the Benefits from using OQRS (On-Line QSL Request System) for BOTH the QSL requester and QSL Manager, saving them BOTH Time and Money. It is posted on the QRZ.com listing for P3F.

QSL info:

The P3F log is uploaded to LoTW soon after each contest.

If you wish to request a paper QSL, here are your options, in order of preference:

OQRS: via [MOURX](#) - bureau or direct QSLing options are available.

Direct: via snail-mail - see [MOURX](#)

Via bureau: PLEASE try the OQRS bureau request in preference to sending your QSL via the bureau. Send your card via the bureau **only as a last resort**.

Benefits of OQRS

OQRS saves time and money!

- you don't have to send your QSL
- when using OQRS to request direct QSLs, you don't have to pay to mail your card to me
- when using OQRS to request bureau QSLs, you save the transit time from you to your local bureau and from there to the incoming bureau PO box and from there to me. There are huge time savings to be had.

when using OQRS to request bureau QSLs, not only do you save lots of time, but you help to cut down the workload of your local outgoing bureau and the incoming bureau.

There is no reason NOT to use OQRS!

12/31/14 23:59 UTC

By Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

My last QSO of 2014 was at the very end of the New Year's Eve "red badge madness", when every high-point-value ARRL staffer, elected official, and appointee had a pileup going. Many of these were working split, so indeed the bands sounded like a bunch of simultaneous DXpeditions in full swing. That last QSO was with Dave Sumner, K1ZZ. It was slightly longer than most of those contacts—I think we exchanged HNY Dave and HNY Tom.

I bumped the tuning knob for the next QSO just as I saw the second hand of the WWVB clock hit 12—that is, 1/1/15 00:00.

Dead silence.

Centennial Comments

By Tom Russell, N4KG

The W1AW Centennial certainly required a HUGE investment of Time and Effort.

I was motivated by the opportunity to confirm (via LoTW) WAS on the WARC Bands where I only had one or two states per band.

I worked all 50 on 30 and 17 CW (and 80,40,20,15), missing only 4 on 12M CW. I only missed SC on 17M SSB and another 10 on 12M SSB.

I also finished off lifetime WAS on 15 and 10 SSB and picked up a BUNCH of Band-States on RTTY (only need KL7 on 80, DEL on 15, 10 more on 10M)

That said, I'm GLAD I won't be around for the Next Centennial !

The Real-Time sign-up schedule and posting of those schedules greatly improved participation and productivity during the second half.

I was surprised and somewhat disappointed to find 77 NOT-in-Log QSOs when I checked my log for LoTW confirmations which represented 3.8% of my contacts. I'm hoping that most of those resulted from Logs NOT submitted vs. busted callsigns or lost contacts due to continuous callers.

SOME of my weak backscatter Q's were lost but MANY 53 and even 51 QSOs were confirmed. Several 599 contacts were NOT confirmed.

2015 NADXC Calendar

2015

January 15						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

February 15						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

March 15						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

April 15						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

May 15						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

June 15						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

July 15						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

August 15						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

September 15						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

October 15						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

November 15						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

December 15						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

 LongPath Published
 Regular Meeting
 Field Day
 Huntsville Hamfest

Contests for December

By Chuck Lewis, N4NM

DARC 10 Meter Contest, (CW/SSB), 10 meters

Jan 11, 0900Z to 1059Z

Exchange: RS(T) plus serial No., DOK code

See page 83, Jan QST and www.darc.de/referate/dx/contest

LZ Open Championship, (CW), 80 & 40 meters

Jan 17, 0000Z to 0400Z

Exchange: S.N. + last S.N. rcvd (6 digits total)

See page 83, Jan QST and www.lzopen.com

HA DX Contest, (CW/SSB), 160-10 meters

Jan 17, 1200Z to Jan 18, 1200Z

Exchange: RST + S.N.

See page 83, Jan QST and www.ha-dx.com

CQWW 160 Meter Contest, (CW), 160 meters

Jan 23, 2200Z to Jan 25, 2200Z

Exchange: RST plus State/Province/DXCC entity

See page 83, Jan. QST and www.CQ160.com

REF French Contest, (CW), 80-10 meters

Jan 24, 0600Z to Jan 25, 1800Z

Exchange: RST plus serial no. (F stns. give Dept. ID)

See page 83, Jan. QST and www.concours.ref-union.org/contest

BARTG RTTY Sprint, (DIG), 80 -10 meters

Jan 24. 1200Z to Jan 25 1200Z

Exchange: Serial no.

See: page 83 Jan. QST & www.bartg.org/uk

UBA (Belgium) Contest (SSB), 80-10 meters

Jan 31, 1300Z to Feb 1, 1300Z

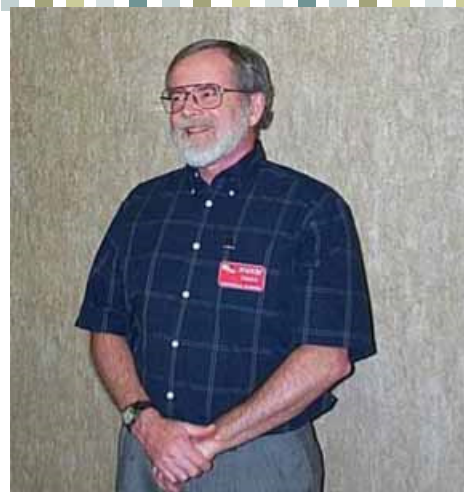
Exchange: RS(T) plus serial no.; ON sends province

See page 83, Jan. QST and www.uba.be/hf/contest-rules

OTHERS:

WAB Top Band Phone Contest,

Jan. 24, 1900Z – 2300Z



CQ WW RTTY WPX Contest,

0000Z, Feb 14 to 2400Z, Feb 15

Dates & times often change or are misprinted in the journals; beware.

Chuck, N4NM